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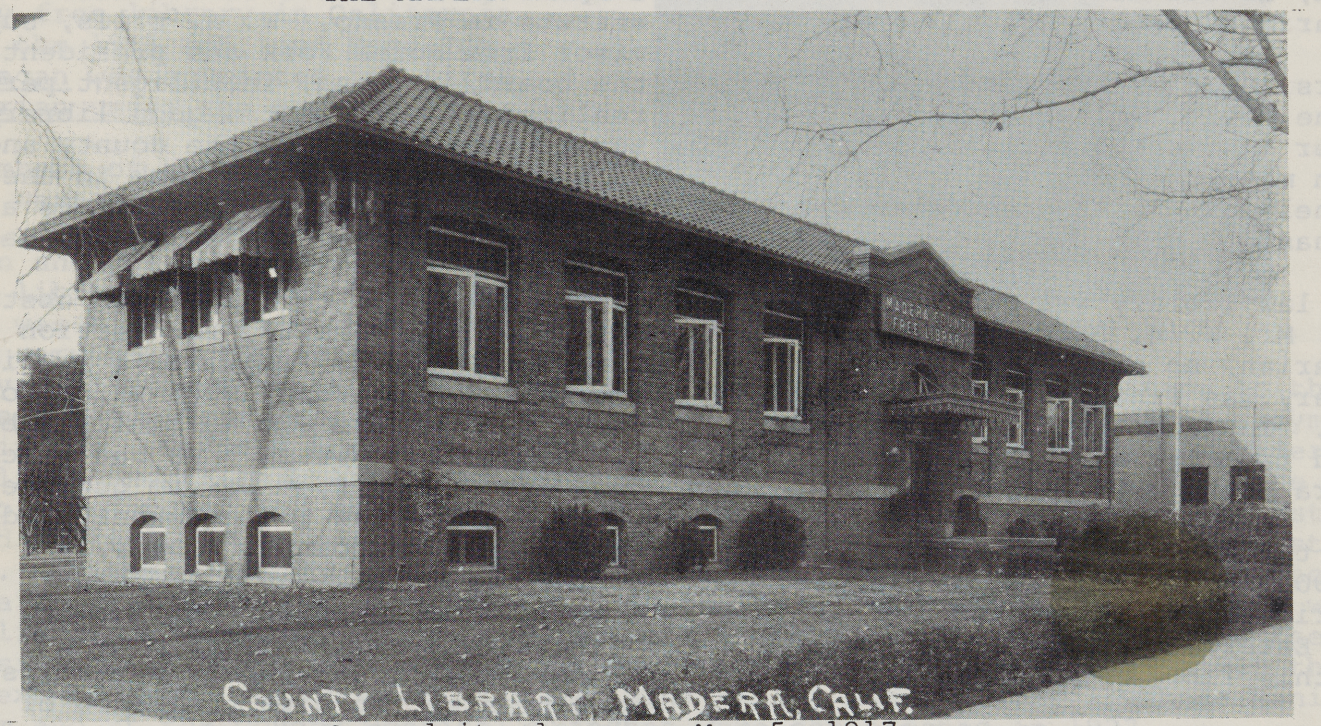
THE MADERA COUNTY FREE LIBRARY



Opened its doors on May 5, 1917

Madera County will dedicate a new library early this fall, so this seemed to be a good time to tell the Library story.

The Madera County Free Library started in 1901 with one book; a book on Forestry, certainly an appropriate book for a county whose name in Spanish means "lumber".

The Madera library had its beginning in the office of County Clerk C. J. Eubanks, in 1901. At the suggestion of Mr. Eubanks, Mrs. William Burk, assistant county clerk wrote letters to prominent people of the state, and to the governors of all the states asking each for the donation of a book. The response to these requests was most gratifying. Many new books and some used ones were received. There were donations of dollar bills with which to buy books. The first book received in response to this request came from the Governor of Oregon. It was a book on forestry.

For the first year the library was kept in the county clerk's office. At the end of that time it was found that there were so many interruptions by library patrons that the work of the office was being interfered with, so the books were moved into the jury room.

Mrs. Burk took great pride in the collection, which was acquired through her efforts, and enjoyed the satisfaction of being able to supply the right books to her patrons. She did all of this without extra remuneration, as did many of the pioneer librarians of that era.

Mrs. Dora Krohn, who was in charge of the Postal Telegraph office in Hunter's Drug Store, read and reported on many of the new books received and helped in making selections for purchase.

A law library was started in May, 1893, Mr. W. H. Larew acting as, librarian, no salary was paid. The library was financed by $2 filing fees. In 1917 the law library was moved from the court house to the new Madera County Free Library.

A teacher's library was established in 1903 and was set up in the County Superintendent of Schools Office, Miss Estella Bagnelle was responsible for this library's beginning.

Madera Countys' first library was totally destroyed when the court house burned on Christmas Eve, 1906, and although Mr. Eubanks made an effort to start another collection, no real assortment of books was obtained until July 1, 1910 when $4500 for library services throughout the county was made available.

An ordinance, establishing a library had been passed by the County Board of Supervisors on April 18, 1910 but no provision of funds was made until May 3.

Miss Harriet G. Eddy, state library organizer, made several trips to Madera in 1909 and 1910 to stimulate library interest.

Quoting from County Free Library Organizing in California 1909-1918 pages 12-13 -- Personal Recollections of Harriet G. Eddy, County Library Organizer, California State Library.

"After finishing in Fresno County, some time was taken to speak at women's club conventions and teachers' institutes, so that organization in Madera County did not get under way till April. Miss Estelle Bagnelle, county superintendent of schools, had invited me when I spoke at the district teachers' institute in Fresno. W. A. Ellis, supervisor from North Fork and president of the board, a young, intelligent person, realized at once what a good library service would mean to the county and to his constituents far back in the mountains. The other supervisors also fell into line and the going was easy.

There was not the slightest obstacle, but a necessary delay, for section 12, the contract plan, required a public library in the county with which to contract. But there was no public library in Madera County! So - we had to crea one! The first step was to get the city of Madera to pass the necessary ordinance and to appoint a library board. Since the law did not specify that trustees needed to be residents, I asked the city council to appoint Supervisor Ellis as a trustee, to give the board of supervisors a feeling of security. Then May 3, 1910, the supervisors entered into a contract with the newly created municipal library. The contract included the provision that all property should belong to the county, since it was understood that as soon as there was a new law, there would be a county library established, under the direct control of the board of supervisors.

In the spring of 1911, as soon as possible after the new law became effective, I returned to Madera county to work with the supervisors in changing over to the new law. Trips were made to all parts of the county to help people understand what was happening.

Some unhappiness was encountered because of a felling that too much power was given by the new law to the librarian, but in general the feeling was cordial. The supervisors had already passed the resolution of intention on May 2 and on June 5 the final resolution of establishment was passed. Dr. Mary Butin, a consistent friend of the library, was instrumental in having the city trustees disestablish the city library that same night, so that the county would at once become a unit for library service. Thus Madera County was the first county free library in California under the 1911 Act, and Miss Ida M. Reagan was appointed its first librarian under the new law."

Mrs. William (May) Burk

Members of the original library board were W. L. Williams, W. A. Ellis, James R. Warner, Robert E. Newman and Joseph E. Newman. The first librarian appointed by the board was Miss Clara C. Field who began service September 1 at a salary of $100 per month. Branch stations for the library, in addition to the Madera headquarters were established at North Fork, Coarsegold, O'Neals, Raymond and Minturn. Raymond and Coarsegold were set up in November, 1910; the Madera, O'Neals and North Fork libraries were activated the following month, and the Minturn office opened its doors in January, 1911. Three other branches were established in 1911. They were the Fresno Flats, the Pines, and the Grub Gulch stations. Ahwahnee and Knowles branch stations were set up in 1912, and the Chowchilla and Fairmead Libraries were opened in 1913. In 1914 branch stations were established at Berenda and Bailey Flats. The First World War interrupted the expansion of the county's library facilities so that it was not until 1919 that the next branches were opened at Sugar Pine and at Mission. At Ahwahnee Sanitarium and at the County Hospital branches were established in 1927.

In 1927 Ashview branch, South Fork and Madera Sanitarium offices were added to the library's growing facilities and in 1928 Eastin was favored with a branch. Power House No. 1 and Sharon got branches in 1929, and the Falls and Central Camp received their library service in 1930. Then 1933 marked the installation of a library at Camp F 91 and the Dairyland, Resident Camp, and CCC Co. 530 each had libraries established in 1934. Alamo Station and Ripperdan Station libraries were opened in 1937 and Dill Station got its library in 1938. Camp Batterson had a library established there in 1939.

The Madera library was first established in the courthouse with hours running from 3 to 6 p.m. three days a week. Demands upon its facilities grew, however, to such a point where it was necessary to give it larger quarters in the First National Bank building.

Beginning Oct. 1, 1911, the Madera Branch Library was kept open all day, and Feb. 1, 1913, the library moved to the McClusky building, 124 South D Street. This building, a two story structure now stands empty and is owned by the

Shebelut family.

Although a resolution was made by the supervisors during a meeting held in September, 1915, to investigate the possibility of securing Carnegie funds for a library building, the county determined to erect its own building, and in Jul 1916, $13,000 was paid for the property upon which the present Madera library now stands. Construction began Sept. 11, 1916. The contractor was Ed Lange and the building cost was $12,500. The building was opened to the public May 5, 1917. Cost of furniture at time of opening was $3,022.90.

Some of the correspondence carried on between W. L. Williams and James Bertram, Secretary of the Carnegie Corporation during the years 1915-1916 is very interesting and somewhat amusing. Various sets of plans were exchanged, comments made and clarification of terms etc. makes intriguing reading. Then finally Madera County said they would build and pay for their own library. The final letter from Madera County to Carnegie Corporation dated January 20, 1919 contained this one paragraph: "While we did not get the gift of $12,500 as we first planned, we are very glad that as a result of our correspondence with you, we have secured a very fine library building."

In 1926, the Fresno Republican published brief stories and pictures of 12 outstanding libraries in the San Joaquin Valley and Madera County was one of the 12.

OUR FIRST LIBRARIAN

Mrs. William Burk, was born in Watsonville, California, and came to Madera in 1886. She went through grammar school here and also attended Elmore's Academy. Elmore's Academy for the information of the moderns, occupied the land where the Dearborn hospital is located.

After her schooling Mrs. Burk went to work in the office of Madera's first county clerk--Charles Eubanks, and in 1900, she and Mr. Eubanks talked over the idea of having a library for local folk. The two decided that this would be a good thing, and Mrs. Burk went to work. One year, she wrote to ten state and county officials each day in every state in the Union. She told them that Madera County wanted to start a library and asked for donations of new and used books. All these goings-on were strictly hush, hush. Nobody in Madera knew of Mrs. Burk's voluminous correspondence with officials from Maine to California and from Washington to Florida or of her intense desire to establish a library here. She did all of this without remuneration. What makes Mrs. Burk's spade work seem unbelievable, in the light of present day methods, is that she was organizing the library absolutely without funds.

Mrs. William Burk (May Green, sister of the late Mrs. A. S. Honeycutt) tried to interest that canny Scot, Andrew Carnegie, in the Madera institution. However, there were too many strings attached to the Carnegie money, and the Supervisors decided they knew how to operate a library.

When you borrow a book from your county library these days, it wouldn't be a bad idea to remember Mrs. Burk and the humble but proud beginnings of this county institution which in 1944-45 loaned 225,583 books and periodicals and operated on a budget of over $25,000 and in 1969 circulation was over 823,099 books and periodicals.

After Mrs. William May Burk, the following persons held the position of Librarian:

On July 8, 1910 Miss Clara Field was appointed librarian to begin service Sept. 1, 1910 at a salary of $100 per month. Miss Field resigned June 7, 1911.

Miss Ida Reagan was then appointed librarian on June 11, 1911 and is accredited with being the first Madera County Librarian under the new library law of 1911. Miss Reagan was a real pioneer and traveled over the county by horse and buggy, began establishing the various county branch libraries listed elsewhere in this story. Miss Reagan resigned on Oct. 5, 1913 to take a position in Butte County.

Miss Maude Mast was appointed on Oct. 15, 1913 to succeed Miss Reagan. Miss Mast resigned June, 1917. Miss Mast was the first librarian in the new library which opened its doors on May 5, 1917.

Miss Mary Ethel Glock became librarian on July 2, 1917. Miss Glock held the position for five years and resigned in Sept. 1921 due to illness. She passed away March 6, 1922. During the five years of her administration the library made great progress and became a vital force in the community.

The County Board selected Miss Julia Steffa on April 4, 1922 to succeed Miss Glock. Miss Steffa resigned June 5, 1923 to go abroad.

In 1923 Madera County was indeed fortunate to acquire Miss Blanche Galloway as librarian. She held this position for 32 years.

Records show that the year 1923-24 had a tax levy for library expenses of $22,347 with 69,245 books in circulation. Listings of yearly circulation show a steady increase down through the years particularly during the depression years of 1930-31-32-33 and 34. Circulation in 1928-29 was only 115,646 volumes but after the market collapse of 1929 money for other amusements became scarcer and according to library circulation figures, reading became more popular as a form of recreation. From the 1929-30 figure of 117,773 the circulation increased steadily and received an impetus until it reached a high mark of 246,125 by 1939-40.

McClusky Building - 124 So. D - 1914

With the coming of World War II, and with so much time given to patriotic activities, library patronage slumped to 242,005 for the 1940-41 period and by the war's most desperate year--1942-43--had reached a low of 194,098.

At the end of the war in 1945-46 it resumed an accelerated upward trend and the records show 231,390 books in circulation during that period.

When Miss Galloway retired in February, 1954, Mr. John Ward became librarian on February 1, 1954 and remained until December 24, 1958. He was very interested in county history and endeavored to carry on the fine program that had been set up by Miss Galloway.

After the resignation of Mr. Ward, Mr. James A. Petrella became librarian. Mr. Petrella resigned on July 12, 1968. Mr. Petrella worked with the County Supervisors in making the plans for the new library.

Since Mr. Petrella's resignation the County Supervisors have been seeking a successor and at last a new librarian has been hired, Dr. Tibor Barteky, assistant City librarian of New Orleans.

For several years the Madera County Board of Supervisors have realized the need for a new library building. They considered quite seriously using the "old court house" after proper remodeling etc. but finally gave up this idea and began making plans for a completely new facility. Final costs and plans were presented and a location was decided.

This beautiful building is now near completion. It is located in the park area at the rear of the present library. This new library is a structure of which the entire county may well be proud, one that will be both useful and modern in every way. The cost of this new building is $400,000.

The County supervisors have reaffirmed intentions to use the old Madera County Library building for three county departments, planning, engineering and sanitation.

The Madera County Free Library has always maintained a reputation for understanding, helpfulness, community interest and progress, willingness to meet every need of the many patrons of the library and high standards in library practice. The exhibits and displays arranged by the staff were always rather special and they continue to be so. The library has always gone far beyond its duty in helping teachers, students and people who had special library needs.

In writing this story we wish we could list all of the staff members over the 70 years but space will not permit.

"NEW LIBRARY ROOM TO BE NAMED FOR MISS GALLOWAY"

These headlines were on the front page of the Madera Daily Tribune on April 8, 1970. Many of the women's organizations of Madera County made a request to the Board of Supervisors that a room in the new library be named for Miss Galloway and the Board unanimously approved this request on April 7, 1970.

Not only because Miss Blanche Galloway served as Madera County Librarian for 32 years but because of her outstanding service to the county of Madera as a librarian and a community leader, it is fitting that we include a special article about her.

Retirement from her position as County Librarian has in no sense of the word

meant retiring from community activities.

Miss Blanche Galloway

She maintains her interest in the local chapter of the American Red Cross, having served as its chairman at the beginning of World War II; later she served as Home Service Chairman and helped many families obtain emergency funds and medical aid.

Miss Galloway has knitted for Red Cross since World War I, the making of afghans being her pet project in which she has interested many groups and individuals. These and other knitted articles are sent to many foreign countries through Red Cross and Church World Service and to veterans hospitals in the U.S.

Miss Galloway is also an active and enthusiastic member of the Farm Bureau Home Department, the Republican Women's Club and the PEO Sisterhood. She is a member of the First Presbyterian Church, where she served as a member of the church Session, and was on the building committee when planning for a new church.

For several years Miss Galloway was in charge of the clothing and textile division for the District Fair.

Miss Blanche Galloway was born in Marshalltown, Iowa where she lived until leaving to go to Drake University at Des Moines. During her high school years she worked in the local library after school and during vacations. This decided her to become a librarian. She received her library credential at Iowa State University, then went to College Point, Long Island where she worked in the Greater New York City Queenborough Library System for the next eight years. Nearly a year later she was asked to go to the American Library Association headquarters in Paris from which she was sent out to camp libraries serving the boys who were waiting to go home. After six months she was sent to Coblentz, Germany where she served for nine months with the Army of Occupation.

In May, 1920 Miss Galloway returned to United States after touring several European countries including Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, and England. She sailed from Naples for New York. Once home she decided that California held more opportunities for librarians than any other place. She went to the State Library in Sacramento and they sent her to Bakersfield to fill a vacancy there in the school department. It was a rule that a two year period must be served in a California Library--before taking the examination qualifying one for a position as a County Librarian. After the two years were up and the examination had been passed, Miss Galloway applied for the position as Madera County Librarian.

When she first took over as librarian, the circulation was 69,245 books yearly which figure increased to upward of 250,000 with the years. During depression years, beginning in 1932 the library budget was sliced by 25 per cent, but circulation continued to increase. Miss Galloway felt that this was mainly because the people of Madera had less money to spend for entertainment so turned

to reading for recreation.

One of the achievements of which she is proud is the building of the Chowchilla Branch Library under WPA. She designed the building and personally supervised much of the work of this library which is reported to be one of the model buildings of its kind in the state.

Another important service to the community was furnishing recreational reading material to the schools of the city and county. She knew that many children had no contact with books except through the schools, so encouraged them to use them as much as possible. She also organized and maintained branches and stations in various localities, some in cotton and migrant camps, during the years.

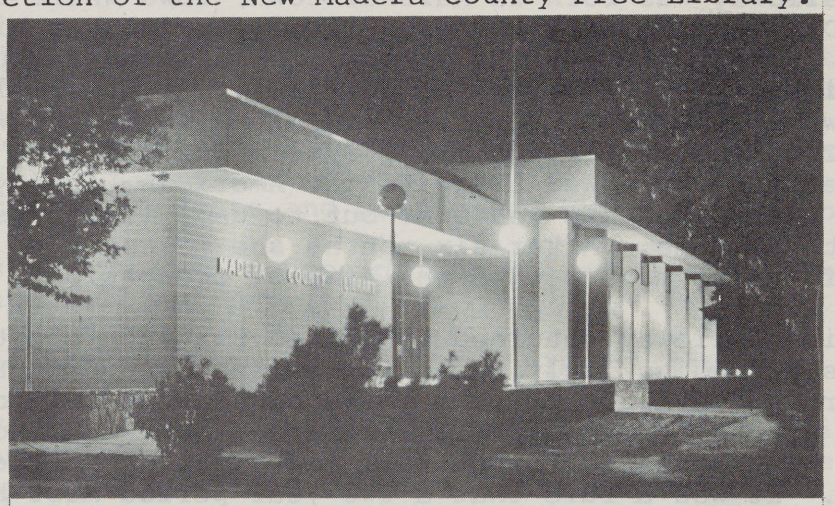
Miss Galloway collected an outstanding amount of California historical material for the library. She became very interested in the history of the state, and has long been a member of the State Historical Society. Later she helped to organize the Madera County Historical Society.

Madera Camp Fire came into being largely through the efforts of this lady, who later served for many years as a council member, Miss Galloway was instrumental in organizing the Madera Business and Professional Woman's Club.

One of her special hobbies is lace collection, which was begun when she was in Belgium. She had an extensive collection of fine laces from all parts of the world, added to by many friends on tours and trips. The collection has been given to the Home Economics Dept. of Fresno State College.

She is listed in "Who's Who in America" as well as "Who's Who on the Pacific Coast" in the 1922-23 edition for articles written in national and state professional publications. Since retiring Miss Galloway has traveled to Alaska, Canada, Florida and Hawaii.

At this writing she is still vitally interested in this community and rejoices in the completion of the New Madera County Free Library.



New Madera County Library Photo by Pat O'Rourke Madera Daily Tribune

Compiled by Maud Lindemann, Curator

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